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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2845
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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4891
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5483
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: EVO CELEBRATES CHE DAY; NO TO U.S. BASES

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary. During his remarks at an October 8 event honoring the 40th anniversary of Che Guevara's death in Bolivia, President Evo Morales unleashed a torrent of anti-U.S. rhetoric, said a new Bolivian Constitution would not permit U.S. military bases in Bolivia, and urged other Latin American leaders to likewise ban U.S. bases. Morales attendance was scorned by many media pundits, political leaders, and retired military officers, doubly so for his intentional snubbing of events paying homage to slain Bolivian soldiers who died fighting Che's band in 1967. A Cuban delegation was honored at the Che event, including veterans of Che's guerrilla campaigns. End Summary.

Strawman of the week: Evo Bans Nonexistent U.S. Bases

¶2. (U) Bolivian President Evo Morales emphasized a "global revolution" against capitalism and urged other Latin American governments to prohibit stationing of "imperialistic" military bases during an October 8 tribute to leftist guerrilla leader Che Guevara. Morales added a new Bolivian Constitution would "not permit any American military base in Bolivian territory" and that "the empire is raising arms against the people; the empire wants military bases in Latin America." Morales also berated supposed designs to turn Bolivia into a source of natural resources for "North America" and warned about "resistance from certain groups" to the "democratic, peaceful" movements underway in Latin America. Morales said the fight against "inhumane capitalism" by left-leaning Latin American governments was a continuation of "Che's fight, the people's fight, the fight of all revolutionaries."

Che Sera Sera

¶3. (U) A multi-national crowd of between 1,000 to 3,000 attended the event honoring the 40th anniversary of Che's death in the town of Vallegrande, close to the spot Che was captured by Bolivian troops in 1967. Morales said the best way for people to remember Che's "fight for equality and justice," was with "honesty, transparency, and an anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal, and anti-colonial position." Over the past week, Morales has described himself

as a "peaceful" admirer of Che: "The only difference I would have with Che is he searched for equality and justice with a gun in his hand." Cuban comrades of Che and the Cuban Ambassador were on hand to pay homage. They were also named "distinguished sons" of Camiri, a town about 100 kilometers from Vallegrande, in conjunction with the 5th Congress of Solidarity with Cuba October 6 and 7, according to Cuban News Agency reports.

AWOL Evo Angers the Troops

¶4. (U) Political and retired military leaders criticized Morales' attendance at the Che event while sidestepping events honoring the 55 Bolivian soldiers who died fighting Che's band. Morales explained during the Che event that "there will be commentaries repudiating my presence (at the event), but I don't have to hide anything; we are Guevaristas, we are humanists and revolutionaries." Retired Army General Alvin Anaya called Morales' behavior "a lack of consideration, disrespectful of the (military) institution." Retired General Gary Prado, who commanded the troops that captured Che, told the Associated Press his request to Army Commander Wilfredo Vargas to honor the soldiers with a national event was ignored. An Army spokesman claimed a La Paz event was suspended because it would duplicate an event in Camiri. The cities of Camiri, Santa Cruz, Trinidad, Oruru, and Cochabamba held memorial events for the soldiers.

¶5. (C) Comment: The active military's response to Evo's snub has been restrained. Army Commander Vargas went the furthest by publicly noting that although he respected Morales' decision, he, as an army officer, was obliged to honor his fellow soldiers. Embracing Che mania may engender Evo to his hard-left base, but insulting the military at precisely the time that he may need the armed forces to quell unrest in Sucre and elsewhere should the Constituent Assembly fail seems poor strategy (a sentiment shared by the Brazilian Embassy with us October 9). Evo used the Che anniversary to bash the U.S., declaring that there will be no "American bases." Since there are no U.S. bases in Bolivia, his statement can be viewed at best as gratuitous.

¶6. (C) Comment Continued: Although he rarely mentions the U.S. by name, it is clear we are the "empire" in Evo's statements. Despite Morales' proclivity to add "peaceful" in front of remarks about seemingly unpeaceful subjects (Che, Iranian nuclear ambitions, the struggle against the empire, etc.), Post remains concerned about Morales' increasingly strident and negative tone about the U.S., democratic institutions, and those that would stand in the way of "the movement." Morales is again talking about what a new constitution will look like, hinting that he ultimately won't let the Constitutional Assembly, Congress, or the courts stand in the way of "the people's" constitution. End Comment.
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